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Cultural Anthropology

Ethnography & Ethnology

**INTRODUCTION**

What do you think of when you think of a hospital? Is it sickness of a loved one, the cry of a new born baby, the pain you see a loved one go through, the devastation of an injury, etc. Right now I am currently watching a dear family friend go through the complications and trauma of Ovarian Cancer and this is what I think of when I think of or go in the hospital. She was just two days ago admitted into the hospice center at Evergreen Hospital and I wanted to do ethnology in honor of her. Seeing someone so amazing going through something so traumatic, and seeing her taken such good care of in such a hard time is awesome and witnessing her hardships has made me stronger. Hospital staffs are so important to the stay at a hospital and are so important to our outcome.

I decided to focus on the general attitudes of the staff at Evergreen Hospital medical center. I was very interested in observing behaviors of employees within the hospital, because for one, they are the ones taking care of my dear friend, and secondly, I want to work in Evergreen Hospital as a nurse when all of my schooling is finished. I decided to observe the main hallway close to the oncology unit, due to the fact that this is where my dear friend spent so much of her time at doctor appointments and receiving chemotherapy. I started my observations in mid morning, and did my second set of observations in mid afternoon. I though that conducting two sets of observations, and separating men and women, would create more accurate data.

**METHODOLOGY**

I conducted my study inside of Evergreen Hospital Medical Center in Totem Lake, Washington. I chose a common and busy area in the hospital near the oncology unit. There is a small café with tables that I decided to sit at to observe. I chose this spot because of its convenient spot in the hospital that is fairly busy and is near the unit that I wanted to study, where I could observe individuals as they pass buy or step into the café. I was able to walk in like I belonged there, get a drink at the café, find a table, and sit down as if I was there for a patient or for myself. The atmosphere was very quiet, even when it was fairly busy. It was nice to see smiling faces and laughter to break up the silence.

As I took in the area that I was sitting and observing, I realized that the hospital is very open and spacey with tall ceilings and lots of windows. There is plenty of natural lighting and because of this it almost feels as if I was outdoors. The open feel of this hallway was very comfortable. As I looked around, I noticed lots of benches and tables for people to sit, once I realized this, I knew I was in the perfect area. From where I was sitting, I could see the tables and chairs outside, and hear the music from the piano playing down the hall. The floor was covered in grey tiles, the walls were white. There are many plants located around me, which I think helps to make me feel so comfortable, and as if I am outdoors. There are color coded signs with department names/elevators/escalators/restrooms/etc hanging from the ceilings to show employees, patients, visitors, etc where to go.

**DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

I observed a large amount of people from the area that I was sitting, and I observed these people based on their attitudes. The attitudes are labeled as follows:

**Table:**

Singl: Single person doing an activity

Grou: Group with a single person doing an activity

Talk1: Talking with one other person

Talk+: Talking with more than one person

Drink: Holding/drinking a drink

Eat: Eating Something

Sitt: Sitting

Walk: Walking

Carr: Carrying an item (excluding a purse)

Push: Pushing something

Run: Running

T/P: Texting or talking on the phone

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **MEN** | **ACTIVITY** | **WOMEN** | **ACTIVITY** |
| **1** | Grou/W | **1** | Push |
| **2** | Grou/W | **2** | Grou/W/Carr |
| **3** | Talk1 | **3** | Talk1 |
| **4** | T/P | **4** | Walk |
| **5** | Singl | **5** | Walk |
| **6** | Walk | **6** | Walk |
| **7** | Drink | **7** | Eat |
| **8** | Drink | **8** | Walk |
| **9** | Drink | **9** | Walk |
| **10** | Talk1 | **10** | Talk1/Drink |
| **11** | Sitt | **11** | Walk |
| **12** | Push | **12** | Walk |
| **13** | Carr | **13** | Walk |
| **14** | Singl | **14** | Walk |
| **15** | Drink | **15** | Carr |
| **16** | Walk | **16** | Drink/walk |
| **17** | Walk | **17** | Sitt |
| **18** | Talk+ | **18** | Talk+ |
| **19** | Talk+ | **19** | Talk+ |
| **20** | Walk | **20** | Eat |
| **21** | T/P | **21** | Talk1 |
| **22** | Carr | **22** | Talk1 |
| **23** | Eat | **23** | Eat/Drink |
| **24** | Eat | **24** | Eat |
| **25** | Eat/Drink | **25** | Carr/Drink |
| **26** | Sitt/Eat/Drink | **26** | Sitt/Eat/Drink |
| **27** | Singl | **27** | CI |
| **28** | Run | **28** | Run |
| **29** | Carr | **29** | Run |
| **30** | Walk | **30** | Run |
| **31** | T/T | **31** | Push |
| **32** | Walk | **32** | Talk1 |
| **33** | Carr | **33** | Talk1 |
| **34** | Eat/Drink | **34** | Walk |
| **35** | Carr | **35** | T/T |
| **36** | Walk |
| **37** | Carr |
| **38** | Walk |
| **39** | Drink/Walk |
| **40** | Walk |

\* color represents time of day person was observed

From talking previously with a nurse in the oncology department, I knew that people with badges with their names on it were most likely employees of the hospital. I was also looking for people in scrubs of white coats, who would most likely be doctors, nurses, nursing assistance, medical assistance, etc. These are the people that I was looking for. I saw only slightly a few more women than that of men. The people that I observed were either wearing a badge or had some sort of indication that they were hospital staff. When observing the employees the majority of them seemed to be walking and seemed as if they had a precise destination and knew where they were going. There were a few staff members pushing items, for the most part, the men were pushing carts, and the women were pushing wheelchairs.

There was only one case when I saw people running, and for me, this was the best part of my day. I was on my late afternoon shift watching people, and 3 women and 1 man were in the café when a code was called over the loud speaker. I am guessing that the 4 of them were nurses due to the fact that they were in scrubs. After the call was heard, they all stopped what they were doing and ran up the stairs. I am not sure where they went, but I am sure that it must have been an emergency.   
I observed many people with drinks or food that they were eating, and it seems to be that it was split pretty evenly between that of men and women. I was very happy to see that most of those drinks that they were holding or drinking were bottles of water, with the occasional coffee. It was good to see that the food choice was healthy as well. The café did not have much to offer food wise, but the choices of the staff were usually fruit or a muffin. There were a few incidences where two staff walked past one another and said hello, but there was not much communication after that, and a few of which that stopped and had a conversation. A few men who passed by that were carrying the newspaper, however the interesting thing, is I saw no women doing this. If women were carrying something it was usually a plastic bag of some sort, or a box. I am assuming these bags and boxes contained medical supplies of some sort. I observed a total of 18 men and 25 women in the mid morning shift, and 17 men and 15 women in the late afternoon shift. I thought it was very interesting how there were more men than women in the second shift than in the first. I think that this could be so because men are usually out later in the day, while women go back home to be with their children and families. This is just an assumption, I would have to have more data to know.

Of all of the people that I observed, most of them were Caucasian, however some of them were of different descents, for example, Asian, African American, Indian, etc. I found that there were few conversations that occurred. I found that my thinking was correct in the fact that people tend to keep to themselves. The conversations that did go on were very brief and not very detailed, except for these two women. There were two Caucasian women who stood and talked for a good 15 or 20 minutes.

I felt as if the overall mood of the hospital was very quiet and sad. This did not surprise me because bad health, disease, hurting, etc, are all depressing and sad things. Very few people were walking together in groups, and even if they were, they did not seem happy. I would be interested to see what the job titles of the people who I observed were. When I see nurses up in the rooms they seem very happy and content, whereas I did not see this reaction when observing them. It would be interesting to know if this is just a face that they put on and if they really are unhappy. It was interesting not seeing too many diverse cultures through my observations and it makes me wonder what kind of language barriers may exist. I feel as if the mood of the hospital is constantly changing. I feel that depending on the area that is observed, it is always going to be different. If observing the emergency room, it would probably feel panicked and rushed, if it was the oncology ward it would feel sad and helpless, if it were the family maternity center, it would feel happy for new lives, etc.

CONCLUSION

I have learned so much from this ethnography. I have learned that there are so many factors that go into an area and if you just take the time to stop and observe you can learn so much. There could be so much happiness or sadness going on in someone’s life that is walking/running/talking/drinking/carrying something/etc. and you may never know it from looking at them. None of the people that I observed seemed to be unhappy, in pain, or hurt, but on the other hand, none of them seemed to be extremely happy or laughing as well. If I were to keep going with this study I would want to look more into the different areas of the hospital and how the moods of each are different from one another. I would love to know the mood of the Emergency room compared to that of the Maternity ward, compared to that of the Surgery center, compared to that of the oncology unit, etc. I think that learning this would help to show where the most happiness and sadness lies in the hospital and I think that that would be of much interest to me. I think that these different areas and how the mood is affected would be huge on the affect of mood throughout the whole hospital.